



## RIB MOUNTAIN STATE PARK Master Plan Newsletter

### **Presented for Your Review and Comment**

**The Department of Natural Resources invites you to review and comment on; the Draft Vision Statement, Property Goals and 4 possible “Alternatives” developed for the new Master Plan for Rib Mountain State Park.**

#### **Included in this Newsletter:**

- Notice of Public Information Meeting / Listening Session #2- page 1.
- Article on the September 11, 2003 Public Information Meeting and Summary of Comments- page 2.
- The Draft Vision Statement and Property Goals- pages 2 and 3.
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### **Please Join Us!**

**Rib Mountain State Park - Master Plan Revision**

#### **Public Information Meeting / Listening Session #2**

**Date and Time:** Thursday, May 20, 2004 from 6- 9 PM

**Location:** The Park Inn, 2101 N. Mountain Road, Wausau, in the Pinery Room

#### **Meeting Objective:**

**The objective of this meeting is to share and receive comment on the Draft Vision Statement, Property Goals and a range of four possible “Alternatives” to the future management of the park.**

#### **Meeting Agenda**

6:00 – 6:50 PM- Presentation of the Draft Vision & Goals and the Master Plan Alternatives.

6:50 – 7:00 PM- Break

7:00 – 9:00 PM- Public Listening Session.

Participants will have the opportunity to visit several “listening stations” that will be set up around the meeting room. Each will display information on individual topics, including; the Draft Vision and Goals, each of the 4 possible management “Alternatives” and the property boundary. The “listening stations” will be staffed by a member of the master planning team and will have “flip charts” available where participants may write their comments. Participants will be invited to ask questions and to provide comments or suggestions on each topic.

**Interested parties may provide comments by attending the May 20<sup>th</sup> Public Information Meeting / Listening Session or by submitting written comments by mail or email.**

Meeting participants, and those who were not able to attend will have 2 weeks following the May 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting to submit written comments. **All comments should be directed to William Bursaw at the mail or email addresses indicated below.**

**Master Plan Contact Person:** WILLIAM BURSAW, Assistant Property Manager

Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources

4200 Park Road, Wausau, WI 54401-8286 Phone: 715-842-2522 Email: [william.bursaw@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:william.bursaw@dnr.state.wi.us)

## **The September Public Information Meeting / Listening Session**

Last September 11th, the Department of Natural Resources held the first in a series of 3 public information meetings / listening sessions to receive public input on the development of a new Master Plan for Rib Mountain State Park. The meeting served to introduce the process that will be used to develop the Master Plan, and to receive initial public input. It was attended by approximately 50 interested citizens including; local property owners, members of local organizations, and representatives from local and state government. Approximately 80 comments were received at and following the meeting.

Primarily, comments expressed support for preserving the Park's natural character and maintaining the ecological health of the existing, northern hardwood vegetation. Several comments suggested keeping things as they are and keeping the development of any new recreational facilities to a minimum. Others suggested the development of new facilities, including; a new contact station / nature center, unpaved hiking trails extending into the land on the west end of the Park, low impact mountain bike trails and the widening of the park road to better accommodate exercise walkers. Generally participants liked the natural character of the park and the scenic overlooks. Dislikes included the effects of deer overpopulation on the landscape and the loss of the upper campground sites. Participants suggested that the "Draft Vision Statement" should include wording that recognizes the park's natural beauty, the unique geological and ecological features and the year-round recreational opportunities. Additional information on the comments is available on the master plan's web site.

### **Comments Regarding the Ski Hill and Communications Towers Lease Areas**

A number of the comments expressed opposition to the recent expansion within the ski hill lease area, and the presence of communications towers located within the State Park's boundary. The management of the ski hill lease area is governed by the terms of an existing 30-year lease agreement between the State of Wisconsin and Granite Peak Corporation. Therefore, the management of the existing ski hill lease area is not within the scope of the master plan revision. Similarly, areas currently leased for communications towers and associated buildings are also governed by existing lease agreements and also will not be a part of the new master plan. Additional information on this topic is available on the master plan web site (see page 6).

Any public comments regarding the lease areas may be directed to the DNR representative:

Bruce Chevis, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921,  
email: bruce.chevis@.dnr.state.wi.us.

To the extent possible, the DNR representatives will work cooperatively with the lease holders to address any public concerns. The input received at and following the September 11<sup>th</sup> Public Meeting will be carefully considered, along with other relevant information, in the development of the Master Plan.

## **The Draft Vision Statement and Property Goals**

Based on the public comments and other key considerations, the master planning team has prepared the following Draft Vision Statement, and Property Goals. These form the skeletal framework for and will guide the development Master Plan. **The following Draft Vision Statement and Property Goals are provided for public review and comment:**

### **DRAFT Vision Statement**

Rib Mountain State Park contains the regional landmark of Rib Mountain, which rises 640 feet above the surrounding landscape. It provides some of the most expansive vistas and unique geologic features within the Wisconsin State Park System. The park provides a place to enjoy these scenic views and other recreational, educational and social experiences. In addition to serving the state and the central Wisconsin region, the park is strongly linked to the adjacent communities, providing valued natural open space and outdoor recreational opportunities within a growing urban setting. The park also conserves Rib Mountain's unique geological features, native ecological communities, and culturally important structures and trails.

### **DRAFT Property Goals**

- Provide large, undeveloped spaces for quiet, solitude and the enjoyment of the natural surroundings.
- Maintain and enhance the scenic viewing opportunities from within the Park.
- Maintain and enhance natural aesthetic character within the park, with an emphasis on native vegetation.
- Limit park facility development to preserve the majority of the existing natural forest habitat.
- Maintain and enhance park buildings, structures and signs to have a unified aesthetic character that is harmonious with the natural surroundings and recognizes the Park's historic character.
- Provide modest concession services, built and operated by non-profit organizations, which meet park standards of design, service and hospitality.
- Provide compatible, year-round, active and passive, non-motorized outdoor recreational and educational opportunities that are suited to the physical and ecological characteristics of the property.
- Expand the existing hiking trail system into the newly acquired western end of the park, and work with County and Municipal recreational planners to provide connections to adjacent county and municipal trails and nearby recreation lands.
- Provide and manage spaces for cultural and educational programs and social events that are compatible with other uses and recognize the park's limited amount of level terrain and parking space.
- Manage the existing vegetative cover to maintain and encourage the regeneration of a high quality, diverse, northern hardwood forest community dominated by larger diameter, mature trees for public enjoyment and education, scenic quality, wildlife habitat and other ecological benefits.
- Preserve areas of geological and cultural significance and provide educational opportunities and programs that interpret them.
- Protect and mitigate any impacts to known rare, threatened and endangered species or species of special concern.

### **The Master Plan Alternatives**

A "Master Plan Alternative" is one of a number of *possible* approaches to the future management of the park's resources, facilities and recreational uses. **The "Alternatives" are intended solely to explore and evaluate various theoretical approaches to managing the park's facilities and resources.** Each "Alternative" has been developed based on a theme that describes a particular approach to the future management of the park. Four Alternatives have been developed that range from a conservative, or "status quo" approach, to an approach that aims to maximize the park's recreational potential. All of the Alternatives have been developed to fit within the land's physical and ecological characteristics and capabilities, as well as the Department's regulations and policies applying to State Parks. The Master Plan Alternatives below have been developed based on; scientific data, input received from the public and property managers and Department's regulations and policies applying to State Parks.

Each Master Plan Alternative will consist of a map of the property indicating the general land management zones and facilities along with a written description of the general management activities, facilities, and recreational uses proposed for each. There will also be a broad, comparative evaluation of the impacts that would result from the management activities, facilities, and recreational uses proposed in each of the Alternatives.

**Public participants are invited to comment on; what they like or dislike about each, which Alternative or combination of Alternatives they like best, and to suggest how their preferred Alternative might be further improved. Participants may also suggest combining individual elements from one or more of the Alternatives.**

## **Summary of Alternatives 1-4.**

**All of the proposed Alternatives would include the following elements:**

- Preservation of existing features or facilities, and the continuation of current management practices, unless otherwise noted.
- Installation of a new water distribution system and sanitary sewer system.
- Construction of a new Public Entrance Visitors Station Building and Nature Center, however, the various Alternatives examine a variety of possible locations within the Park.
- Renovation of the park's road and parking area pavement.
- Development of a park-wide system of directional and information signs that meets current state park design standards.
- Maintenance and enhancement of the scenic quality, health, structure and encourage regeneration of approximately 1,000-acres of northern hardwood and aspen forest with scattered conifers, dominated by large diameter longer-lived species.
- Reduction the deer population to a level equal to the larger deer management unit, to allow the re-growth of the forest understory vegetation.
- Management of existing lease areas according to the terms of the existing lease agreements.
- Development of a system of interpretive trails and outdoor exhibits in conjunction with the interpretive program themes developed for the proposed Nature Center.

### **Alternative 1**

**This Alternative proposes to continue the current park management practices with a minimal amount of modifications to the Park's facilities. Any new construction of facilities would be limited to improvements that are required to maintain park services and to meet current standards and regulations, while preserving at least 95% of the current undeveloped natural areas.** Alternative 1 would include the following elements:

- Construct a new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building with an attached nature center room and improvements to the surrounding parking area, in the location of the existing contact booth.
- Renovate the existing 30-site rustic campground and eliminate 3 campsites to meet current design standards.

### **Alternative 2**

**This Alternative proposes to provide day-use only facilities and "low impact" trails, while preserving at least 90% of the current undeveloped natural areas.** Alternative 2 would include the following elements:

- Construct a new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building and parking area located on Park Road, approximately 4,000 feet NW of the intersection of Park Road and Violet Avenue.
- Construct new Maintenance Buildings located in the wooded area NW of the proposed PEVS Building (see location above)
- Develop an 8-foot wide, paved walking path 50'-100 feet south of and parallel with Park Road extending from the PEVS to the amphitheater parking area.
- Remodel the existing Park Shelter Building into a Nature Center / Concession Building with restrooms.
- Convert the existing 30-site campground to a day use picnic area with 8 family picnic sites and 4 group picnic sites and an adjacent 20 car parking area.
- Develop a 1-mile long primitive hiking trails linking the existing trails west to the quarry area.
- Develop a 2-mile long, single-track mountain bike trail located on the eastern side of the park with parking provided adjacent to the proposed PEVS building.

### **Alternative 3**

**This Alternative proposes to provide both day-use and group camping facilities, and low-impact trails, while preserving at least 90% of the current undeveloped natural areas.** Alternative 3 would include the following elements:

- Construct a new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building, attached Nature Center room in the location of the existing contact booth.
- Widen Park Road to add a 8-foot wide, pedestrian / bike lane, extending from the utility easement parking area to the amphitheater parking area.
- Renovate the existing 30-site rustic campground and eliminate 3 campsites to meet current design standards.
- Develop 3.2-miles of new primitive hiking / snowshoeing trails extending into the newly acquired, western portion of the park with 6 primitive, walk-in campsites.
- Develop a 2.5-mile long hiking / snowshoeing trail located on the eastern side of the park with a gravel parking area constructed on Park Road adjacent to the intersection with the utility easement.
- Construct a group campground to accommodate approximately 60 campers located on the south side of the Park Road opposite the existing campground.

### **Alternative 4**

**This Alternative proposes to maximize the park's recreational potential within the physical and biological capabilities of the site, providing both day-use and family, RV and group camping facilities, while preserving at least 90% of the current undeveloped natural areas.** Alternative 4 would include the following elements:

- Construct a new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building and parking area located on the south side of Park Road approximately 400 feet NW (up-hill) of the last residence on the north side of Park Road.
- Construct new Maintenance Buildings located south of the proposed PEVS Building (see location above).
- Develop an 8-foot wide, paved walking path 50'-100 feet south of and parallel with Park Road extending from the PEVS to the amphitheater parking area.
- Construct a new Nature Center / Concession Building at the top of the hill, in the location of the existing Concession Stand adjacent to the existing SW parking area.
- Remove or relocate the existing Park Shelter Building and construct a new section of road to connect the NW and SW ends of Park Road, to allow a looping vehicle circulation pattern and the reconfiguration of the NW parking area to add 4-6 family picnic sites.
- Renovate the existing 30-site rustic campground and eliminate of 3 campsites to meet current design standards.
- Construct a 10-site RV campground on the south side of the Park Road opposite the existing campground.
- Develop a 2.5-miles of mountain biking trails in the eastern side of the park with a gravel parking area.
- Develop 3.2-miles of new primitive hiking and interpretive trails extending into the western portion of the park.
- Construct a rustic group campground in the western portion of the park to accommodate approximately 60 campers, a parking area and a paved access road extending SW from the end of Grouse Lane.

### **What's Next?**

Following the close of the public comment period on June 4<sup>th</sup>, the master planning team will analyze and summarize the comments received. Those comments will be considered by the master planning team, along with other key considerations, in the development of the "Draft Master Plan Revision and Environmental Assessment". By late summer or early fall we expect to be ready to hold the third in the series of three public meetings to receive public comments on the Draft Master Plan and Environmental Assessment. That meeting will be widely announced in the local community and a notice will be sent to those on the master plan's mailing list. We hope you can come and share your thoughts and ideas as we continue with the development of a Master Plan Revision for Rib Mountain State Park. In the meantime, don't hesitate to contact us should you have any questions.

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

## **Additional Information Available**

The following additional information is available on the master Plan's web site:

- **“The Regional Analysis”**- This is a 19-page summary of the information that has been gathered in preparation for the development of the Master Plan. It includes descriptions and maps of the region surrounding the Park, and the resources, facilities uses and management issues within the Park. It also includes a set of “Findings and Conclusions” that are intended to guide the Master Plan's development.
- **“The Master Plan Alternatives”**- This is a complete description of the four possible management Alternatives and a map illustrating each. It will include a comparative Impact Analysis of the Alternatives.
- **“Report on the September 11, 2003 Public Information Meeting and Summary of Public Comments Received”**.
- **“Lease Area Informational Sheet”**- This provides additional background and explains why the current Rib Mountain State Park Master Plan process does not include state lands that are currently leased to other entities.